

BIRDS

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NEW ZEALAND NATIVE BIRD PROTECTION SOCIETY (INC.)



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THE NEW ZEALAND NATIVE BIRD PROTECTION SOCIETY (INC.)

Invites all those who have respect for our wonderful and unique native birds, all those who realise the great economic and aesthetic value of birds, all those who wish to preserve our unrivalled scenic beauties, to band together with the Society in an earnest endeavour to fully awaken public interest and secure efficient preservation, conservation and intelligent utilisation of our great heritage.

With the co-operation, appreciation and assistance of the general public New Zealand can stand unrivalled. Without such our forests will be hopelessly marred and destroyed by fire, animals and wasteful exploitation.

The subscriptions are—Life members £5, Endowment members £1 per annum. The ordinary subscription, adults 5/-, children 1/-. Endowment members comprise those who desire to contribute in a more helpful manner towards the preservation of our birds and forests. Besides this, we ask for your co-operation in assisting to conserve your own heritage. Is it not worth while?

We aim at issuing only accurate information, all of which is checked by leading authorities. No remuneration is asked by any of our officers. Your contribution goes solely towards better informing others.

THE NEW ZEALAND NATIVE BIRD PROTECTION SOCIETY (INC.).

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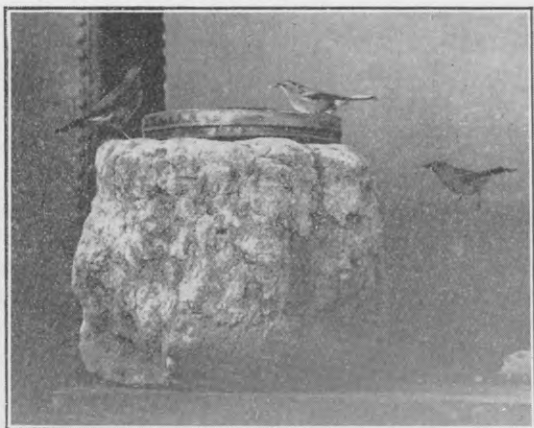
Otago Branch: Box 672, Dunedin.

Southland Branch: Box 154, Invercargill. - Hon. Sec.: J. B. Thomson, Esq.

OBJECTS.—To advocate and obtain the efficient protection and preservation of our native birds, enlisting the natural sympathy of our young, unity of control of all wild life, and the preservation of sanctuaries, scenic reserves, etc., in their native state.

Affiliated with the International Committee for the Protection of Wild Birds.

The foundation of true conservation is in the setting aside of sanctuaries efficiently and rigidly controlled by men who know how.



BELLBIRDS PARTAKING OF AUGUST FARE.

NO nation can live in prosperity without a sufficiency of forests, because forests and shrub-covering control the water run-off, conserve the water, maintain equable climatic conditions, prevent erosion, and operate in many other ways essential to the well-being of the land upon which we all depend. No exotic forest can possibly equal the indigenous forest as evolved by Nature for water conservation, owing to the foreign forest lacking the essential floor-covering so characteristic of our native forest. Fish conservation is very largely dependent on the preservation of our native forest in its natural state because it controls rivers, streams, and all fresh water. Waterfowl for the same reason are largely dependent on our native forest. Game birds require cover, as the first essentials are food and shelter, and these are afforded by the covering of shrub and forest. All native birds are dependent upon a return to the natural condition of our native forest. Thus we see that Man's prosperity in New Zealand is inter-allied with the preservation of our native forest in its natural condition; and any exotic animal introductions into that forest must in the course of time affect man because they destroy the essential factor—the floor-covering of our native forest. Witness the havoc wrought by deer, goats, pigs, moose, wapiti, etc., etc., etc. The undergrowth of shrubs, ferns and young trees is first destroyed by these animals, the roots of the more mature trees exposed, endangering their existence, and finally the existence of the forest itself.

THE CALL OF NATURAL BEAUTY.

"As the centuries pass the mystery of the Universe deepens. The thoughts of civilised man accumulate like snowflakes on the summit of Everest, or the leaves of many years in winter woods, burying one past system after another, one fashion after another, in religion, science, poetry and art. Knowing that so much lies buried beneath, which but now was so hot and certain, it becomes ever more difficult to trust so implicitly as of old whatever still for the moment lies on the surface of human thought, the still surviving dogma, or the latest fashion in opinion. At least it becomes difficult to trust either to dogma or to thought alone. Man looks round for some other encouragement, some other source of spiritual emotion that will not be either a dogma or a fashion, something

'That will be for ever

'That was from of old.'

And then he sees the sunset, or the mountains, the flowing river, the grass and trees and birds on its banks. In the reality of these he cannot fail to believe, and in these he finds, at moments, the comfort that his heart seeks. By the side of religion, by the side of science, by the side of poetry and art, stands Natural Beauty, not as a rival to these, but as the common inspirer and nourisher of them all, and with a secret of her own beside.

"The appeal of natural beauty is more commonly or at least more consciously felt to-day than ever before, just because it is no new argument, no new dogma, no doctrine, no change of fashion, but something far older yet far more fresh, fresh as when the shepherd on the plains of Shinar first noted the stern beauty of the patient stars. Through the loveliness of nature, through the touch of sun or rain, or the sight of the shining restlessness of the sea, we feel

'Unworded things and old to our pained heart appeal.'

"And to the young who have no pain, who have not yet kept watch on man's mortality, nature is a joy responding to their own, haunting them like a passion.

"This flag of beauty, hung out by the mysterious Universe, to claim the worship of the heart of man, what is it, and what does its signal mean to us? There is no clear interpretation. But that does not lessen its value. Like the Universe like life, natural beauty is also a mystery. But whatever it may be, whether casual in its origin as some hold who love it well, or whether as others hold, such splendour can be nothing less than the purposeful message of God—whatever its interpretation may be, natural beauty is the ultimate spiritual appeal of the Universe, of nature, or of the God of nature, to their nursing man. It and it

alone makes a common appeal to the sectaries of all our religious and scientific creeds, to the lovers of all our different schools of poetry and art, ancient and modern, and to many more beside these. It is the highest common denominator in the spiritual life of to-day.

"Yet now that it is most consciously valued, it is being most rapidly destroyed upon this planet. . . . In old days it needed no conservation. Man was camped in the midst of it and could not get outside it, still less destroy it. Indeed, until the end of the eighteenth century the works of man only added to the beauty of nature. But science and machinery have now armed him with weapons that will be his own making or undoing, as he chooses to use them; at present he is destroying natural beauty apace in the ordinary course of business and economy. Therefore, unless he now will be at pains to make rules for the preservation of natural beauty, unless he consciously protects it at the partial expense of some of his other greedy activities, he will cut off his own spiritual supplies, and leave his descendants a helpless prey forever to the base materialism of mean and vulgar sights.

"This matter has become a public question of the first magnitude. The value of natural beauty is admitted in words by our public men, but when it comes to deeds the doctrine is too new to bear much fruit. It has for centuries been held sacrilege to destroy a church, so churches are guarded from destruction and even exempted from taxation. But a place of natural beauty may be destroyed, and is now actually to be taxed by the State in order that it may the sooner be sold to the jerry-builder. Meanwhile, the State itself pours forth the money of ratepayer and taxpayer for the perpetration of outrages on the beauty of the country. Those who mourn over the destruction of abbeys long



WHITE HERON.

[Photo. per favour "Christchurch Sun."]

ago, should look also at the beam in our own eye, and hasten to save from destruction or disfigurement parks, woodlands, and valley heads.

"This is a civic duty that cannot any longer be neglected without dire consequences. Destruction walks by noonday. Unless the State reverses the engines and instead of speeding up destruction, plans the development of the country so that the minimum of harm can be done to beauty, the future of our race, whatever its social, economic and political structure may be, will be brutish and shorn of spiritual value."

[Extracted from "*The Call and Claims of Natural Beauty*" by Prof. O. M. Trevelyan, University College and University College Hospital Medical School, at London, England, October 26, 1931.

A PLEA FOR THE TREES.

TO THE WAYFARER.

Ye who pass by and would raise your hand against me, hearken ere you harm me. I am the heat of your hearth on the cold winter nights, the friendly shade screening you from the summer sun, and my fruits are refreshing draughts quenching your thirst as you journey on. I am the beam that holds your house, the board of your table, the bed on which you lie, and the timber that builds your boat. I am the handle of your hoe, the door of your homestead, the wood of your cradle, and the shell of your coffin. I am the bread of kindness and the flower of beauty. Ye who pass by, listen to my prayer! Harm me not.

The above may be seen set up in the parks in Portugal.

HAVE WE TAKEN HEED?

A monument stands at Bourke's Pass, which leads through the hills in the Mackenzie country, on which is the following inscription:—

"To put on record that Michael John Bourke, a graduate
"of Dublin University and the first occupier of Raincliff
"Station, entered that Pass—known to the Maoris as
"Te Kopi Opihi—in 1885.
"Oh, ye who enter the portals of the Mackenzie to found
"homes, take the word of a child of the misty gorges and
"plant forest trees for your lives! So shall your moun-
"tain facing and river flats be preserved to your
"children's children and you evermore."

OIL POLLUTION.

"Wild ducks lie dead and dying by the score, even hundred, on the South Beach this week, as they have lain for the past week or ten days. Helpless from floating oil, they seek the land, forewarned by some instinct of their fate, and there, in such slight shelter as they can find among the low beach hills, die miserably."

This is quoted from the *Martha's Vineyard Gazette* for February of this year. The story continues to paint a sad and vivid picture of the ducks, most of them eiders, trapped by the insidious oil as it floats upon the tide. And this is not an isolated

tragedy. It is multiplied many times where oil-polluted waters take toll of sea bird life, kill or injure shell fish or crustaceans, and upset the entire balance of life in the sea.



BLACK-FRONTED TERN LANDING NEAR NEST.

Oil pollution is therefore an important phase of conservation. It is a part, not only of the problem of preserving wild life and food sources

in the sea, but, as well, conservation of mineral oils. It is an issue of international significance demanding the co-operation of all maritime nations.

What has been done about it? In 1924 the Oil Pollution Act was passed. Under this the dumping of oil or oily bilge from vessels was prohibited within the three-mile limit. No restrictions were placed upon land industry situated on or near navigable streams and dumping their waste into such water courses. This last fact, coupled with the extreme difficulty of any effective enforcement of the Act itself, has brought charges of discrimination from the steamship people, and a more or less careless disregard of the law.

In recognition of the international significance of the question, there was held in Washington, D.C., in 1926, a convention of the maritime nations. An agreement was drawn up binding the

signatories to the dumping of no oils within fifty miles of any coast. Ten nations signed; three—Germany, Italy and Japan—did not. The result was an ineffective and comparatively unobserved pact.

So far as inland waters are concerned legislation of varying efficacy has been locally enacted to check the oil pollution nuisance. In some instances these laws appear to have accomplished their purpose, have been enforced and have brought about a diminution of the pollution. In other cases there are reports of increasing menace from oil waste, with laws entirely inadequate to meet conditions and with a resultant menace both to public safety and to aquatic life. In certain instances, where serious attempts have been made to correct the situation, it has been found that the laws are difficult or impossible of enforcement.

These are not, however, insuperable problems. Co-operation with and between the States, and between the States and a progressive attitude on the part of the Federal Government, can and should bring about a solution. Water is a vital part of our biologic and economic structure. When there is too much of it there is flood and destruction; when there is too little there is drought and destruction; when water is poisoned there is death and destruction. Industry or special interests have no vested right to bring about any of these conditions.

Perhaps most important, and certainly most difficult of regulation, is the problem of oil on coastal waters. Here it becomes an international question. It is an issue that should be above politics and the selfish concerns of vested interests. It is also a problem of economic significance since it involves both waste of mineral oils and wild life.

Some steamship companies have faced the issue and have commanded strict observance of rules against dumping oily bilge, or have installed oil separators on their vessels. These items of equipment reclaim the oil from the bilge water with a resultant saving in fuel costs. Majority opinion appears to be that separators are worth the investment, but it is safe to say that the large majority of oil-burning vessels are not so equipped. And it is equally safe to observe that the majority of these oil-burners pump their oily bilge overboard when and as they wish.

It is thus we find the situation. On the one hand we have the Nature lover and the sportsman seeking the conservation of bird life; we have the important consideration of wise and efficient use of our supply of fuel oils; we have the question of preserving from contamination certain sources of food supply inherent in the sea; we have the bather who prefers to dive through surf that is not slimy with oil. Against these we have

arrayed the political and financial power of the shipping industry of the world, not to exclude the navies, our own having been, in the past, none too careful about how and where it dumped oil.

We have no patience with an attitude that foregoes any regulation because it is hard to enforce. If it is necessary to require that all oil-burning vessels, to be licensed or cleared in and out of a port, be equipped with and use oil separators, then let it be required. Let us demand a right to eat lobsters untainted with fuel oil and to bathe on clean sea beaches. Above all, let us do away with the multiple tragedies, such as that of Martha's Vineyard, with their terrific annual drain upon our aquatic bird life.—*Nature Magazine*.

CONSERVATION BY EDUCATION.

(Report of ALDEN H. HADLEY, Department of Education,
U.S.A.)

Eight years ago, Edward Howe Forbush, widely known ornithologist and conservationist, and long our beloved co-worker, in rendering his Annual Report, made this statement:—"The laws for the protection of wild life in New England are now as near perfection as in any part of the country. . . . In New England we are turning from conservation, now fairly well assured, to education, which will insure the continuation of rational conservation in the future. . . ."

These words, coming from one who had devoted a long and useful life to the cause of bird-protection, are of unusual significance in serving to emphasise the great importance which to-day is being attached to education as a means of helping to solve our problems of wild-life conservation. In other words, we are realising more and more that legislative enactments designed to protect our wild birds and mammals, in order to be effective, must everywhere be backed by an intelligent and sympathetic public opinion.—*Bird Lore*.

AUGUST.

We have to again remind all that August is Bird Month. The feeding of birds has been extensively practised during the last two winters with good results. There are, however, many counteracting agents such as poisoning, poaching by gold seekers, etc., etc., and the winter feeding of birds is more than ever essential this year, in order to assist in maintaining the parent stock. The following recipe will be found very useful in initially attracting nectar-eating birds:—One heaped teaspoonful of Mellins food mixed into paste, dissolve two teaspoons of Nestles sweetened milk in cup of hot water, add one tablespoonful of honey and mix ingredients.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.

The following address was given at the Annual General Meeting, held on 26th April, by our outgoing President, R. A. Anderson, Esq., C.M.G. Unfortunately, Mr. Anderson has, at least for the time being, been compelled to relinquish the office of President owing to increased and urgent demands on his time.

The Council have had regular meetings every three weeks during the past twelve months, and in addition the different sub-committees have met to consider special business. The principal matters dealt with were the deer menace, the shooting of godwit and game birds from motor-cars, bird collecting and bird-liming, the German owl menace, the destruction of hawks and shags, godwit shooting, Little Barrier Sanctuary, destruction by opossums, and poaching. Conditions in all these matters have been bettered.



MAORI SYMPATHISER FEEDING WILD DUCKS.

A short season of seven days was, however, granted by the authorities for Paradise duck shooting. Pukeko shooting is prohibited except in a limited area in Central Otago where, it was alleged some harm was being done by these birds. The Department of Internal Affairs agreed to our

request to prohibit shooting from motor-cars and a regulation was gazetted accordingly. Matters dealing with Little Barrier have been and are being attended to in order to improve this remarkable sanctuary. We have had expeditions out to secure films of birds, and have secured many hundreds of feet of excellent films of birds for picture purposes. The godwit shooting season has been shortened by one month and restricted to certain districts as a result of the Society's efforts, which always include the work of many outside the actual Executive. The objects of the Society are to advocate and obtain sufficient protection and preservation of our native birds, and we ask ourselves what is the best way to secure such a desirable end. One way this can be done is by the preservation of sanctuaries

and the scenic reserves in their native state and the preservation and extension of our native forests; by inducing widespread interest among our people, particularly the young, emphasising the fact that the welfare of the Dominion is bound up in the preservation of our native forests. A great deal has been done in providing scenic reserves throughout the Dominion, but there is still room for a further extension of these reserves in different parts of the country before the axe and the firestick take toll of the beauty spots of certain districts. It is very apparent, when traversing the Dominion, that in many places where the forest has been destroyed for the purpose of grazing it would have paid the country better had the forest been allowed to remain. Erosion has taken place and the grasses have gradually failed, and fern and scrub are now presenting a difficulty in dealing with this land for pastoral purposes.

One of the great difficulties which is hampering the work of this and other societies interested in the preservation of our forests and birds is the divided control exercised through different Departments of State. A good deal has been written in regard to this control of wild life, and it does certainly seem a wise thing that this should be vested in one Department of State, with assistance from local committees in each centre throughout the Dominion. There are an increasing number of people who are keenly alive to the necessity for preservation of our native forests and birds and who would certainly, without fee or reward, be quite prepared to give any assistance necessary to a really live policy undertaken by a proper controlling head whose policy would be in the interests of the Dominion



WILD GREY DUCKS AT BREAKFAST.

first and private interests second. It does seem an anomaly that several Departments should be interested in the same area, or rather have certain powers delegated to them, and this must lead to confusion and want of systematic control. This Society is prepared, through its members, to give every assistance to any Department which may be appointed to a unified controlling position.

So many importations have turned out to be destructive pests that the very greatest care must be taken before any further introductions of birds or beasts are made into the Dominion. Evidence before the Society is accumulating as to the great destructiveness of the German owl, and there seems no way to deal with this pest other than by offering a bounty for its destruction. One of our members has on his own account offered a bounty of 2s. 6d. per head, and it was not long before he had received a considerable number. Where the nests had been secured there was undoubted evidence of the severe raid made on our smaller birds such as the fantail, tomtit, pipit and robin. Efforts were made by the Executive to induce the Acclimatisation Societies to join in a programme of suppression of this pest, but I am sorry to say that we did not get much encouragement. Unfortunately, the funds of the Society are barely sufficient to carry out the work already on hand, and the investment of the income from the Trust Funds only permits of it being used for educative purposes, so that we have to depend on our membership fees for an income which is too small to allow of our devoting any substantial sum for the purposes of destroying this bird. As I have already said, we have procured some very good films of birds in their native state, and it is proposed to have these shown in different parts of the Dominion, particularly amongst the schools. There can be no question that engaging the interest of the children attending the schools is one of the best methods of increasing the interest in the preservation of our native birds and forests, and no effort should be spared to see that the children have reliable information placed before them regarding the value to this country of our native birds and bush. I do not think there is any medium for conveying this information like the film. As a further means of education we will have available next month the Bird Album, which has been in preparation for the last eighteen months, and as each plate will be fully described, this should prove to be a valuable adjunct to the Society's bulletins.

The future policy of the Society should be in the direction of opening branches in not only the main centres, but also in the smaller towns throughout the Dominion. Although many members communicate with the Wellington office and continually supply useful information, yet if the Society is to fulfil its functions adequately it must extend its organisation in such a way as to gather in the native bird lovers from all parts of the Dominion. The membership must be considerably added to if an income is to be obtained sufficient for the Society's needs, and this can only be done by having centres established as I suggest. The Society is well served by its voluntary workers—all officials

give their services free, but as the Society grows it is quite certain that the secretary's position must be filled by a paid official. The work now being done is really too much of a tax on the time of the Hon. Secretary, Captain Sanderson, and if progress is to be made the position will have to be faced shortly.

We have to acknowledge the consideration given us by the Departments of Internal Affairs and Lands and Survey. When unable to accede to our requests they have given us, at any rate, a sympathetic hearing.

BIRD-LIMING.

Everything, no matter how good the intentions are, will be abused by some. Thus the growing regard for birds in New Zealand is being taken advantage of by bird dealers to sell birds. In nine cases out of ten these are captured with the aid of bird-lime, which causes deaths of many other birds besides those which are taken and compelled to give up their life of freedom and liberty for prison confinement. The following article, appearing in the English *Weekly Times*, expresses Dr. Axel Munthe's views on the cruelty of caging birds. It will be remembered that this eminent Doctor was mainly instrumental in getting the Italian Government to make Capri Island a sanctuary. This is a resting place for vast numbers of migratory birds which were much persecuted prior to Signor Mussolini's intervention.

Dr. Axel Munthe, in a letter to *The Times*, writes:—Is it too much to ask you, Sir, to be allowed to send a word of thanks through your paper to the great number of English bird-lovers, who have been writing to me by every day's post, ever since Lord Howard's letter to *The Times* about Capri being declared a bird sanctuary? It is not possible for me in my crippled condition to answer personally all these letters, but I feel ashamed to remain silent when so many kind men, women, and children come forth to say that they rejoice with me in the generous and courageous response the Italian Government has given to my humble appeal for clemency on behalf of the migratory birds of Capri. I well knew that England was the country of bird-lovers, but I did not know that I had so many friends among them. Yes, well may they rejoice, for if all goes well this measure means the opening of a new era for bird protection in Italy.

As I am writing this, a little blackcap is singing under my window at the top of his voice "La Giovinezza," the Fascist hymn:—

Giovinezza, Giovinezza,
Primavera di bellezza,
Il fascismo e la salvezza
Della nostra liberta.

Has, then, the rumour of the new decree already been broadcast among you blackcaps and made you cancel your scheduled long-distance flight across the Mediterranean?

CONFUSING THE SEASONS.

But really you have no business to be serenading Mussolini this time of the year on this island, little blackcapped Fascist! Do not believe a word the violets and the anemones and the cyclamen say; they are always mixing up the seasons, always forgetting that winter has come. Do stay with me as long as you can; sing to me of spring, and make me, too, forget that winter has come! I well know you will soon be off, by command of your Maker, to sing, to fight, to woo, to win, to love, to mate, and to rear your young. You have also, I know, to fulfil your engagement for the opening of the grand opera season, under the patronage of Almighty God, in every English garden, with subdued nightingale rehearsals at dawn among the rhododendrons under a bedroom window, and gala open-air performances the whole day long, with all the leading stars of the company. Then there are to be popular promenade concerts every evening



FANTAIL ON WING.

for the lonely wanderer in the forest among friendly trees, with solos of a belated blackbird singing his ballad late in the night. Then there are to be matinees on all the commons, where the greatest lyric poet of all time will sing Nature's glorious morning hymn to the rising sun. Quivering on invisible wings high overhead, his body so small that a child could clasp it in his hand, and yet his immortal voice is strong enough to fill the whole sky with gladness and every human heart with gratitude.

Do you know where I saw him last, the sky-born God's Messenger, the sun-worshipper? He was beating his wings against the steel bars of his prison, no bigger than a mouse-trap. His head was drooping, his eyes were half closed in the agony of terror, one of his tiny feet was almost torn off by the string of the snare. Was this, then, to be your reward for all the joy you had given to us, little songster? What offence against the

laws of God or man had you committed to be condemned to prison for life like a dangerous criminal?

A HUMILIATING INDICTMENT.

"Skylark, six bob! Handsome present for a child. Skylark, six shillings!"

Yes, you had better go there yourself, to "Club Row" bird market any Sunday morning—Sunday of all days! Go there and read with eyes filled with shame and anger this humiliating indictment against the most civilised city in the world, this damning evidence in the hands of a coming enlightened generation that after all we of to-day were but cruel barbarians.

"Skylark, six bob! Handsome present for a child. Skylark, six shillings!"

You may call it a small matter; you are mistaken, it is a grave matter. The smaller the victim, the greater the crime. What is the use of your preaching the gospel of St. Francis to other nations, less conscious than we of man's responsibility towards the animal world, as long as there is a "Club Row" in every big English town? What is the good of us wishing God-speed to your migratory birds on their perilous homeward flight, as long as there is a cage with an imprisoned bird in so many an English nursery?

When is this ignoble slave traffic of catching and selling wild birds to cease? Have your legislators forgotten your proud record as the freest country in the world? Or why, then, do they not set your captive wild birds free?

THE LITTLE CAPTIVES.

(By DAPHNE NEILD.)

To-day, inside the window of a shop,
A sign attracted me—the one word "STOP!"
I paused, observing there were other words
Calling attention to a sale of birds.

Bright cages housed the pretty little things,
They perched on bars, with sadly quiet wings;
Such lovely tints of yellow, green and blue
Were mingled there in every shade and hue.

A wee brown bird, in solitary state,
Flew back and forth—perhaps he lacked a mate;
Or—was he longing for some woodland tree,
Where linnets sing and chirp right merrily?

Poor little prisoner, who did not wrong,
But used to carol forth in happy song
When they were free; I'm sure God gave them wings
That they might know the joy that freedom brings.

—Taken from *The Woman's Magazine*.

THE MENACE OF THE GERMAN OWL.

(By HUGH ROSS, of Invercargill, Junior Member.)

"Whooll," the haunting cry comes through the night, causing us to look with apprehension at the grey shape perched on the gate-post, a score of yards distant. As we look he ruffles his feathers, bobs his head, and suddenly bursts into cries like whistling laughter.

Little grey killer. That same cry strikes terror to the heart of any small birds within hearing. Again, yet again, does he call. Then on noiseless wings he begins his night's hunting.

The damage done by a single owl in a few nights is almost incredible. Every nest in his hunting ground is robbed. The nests themselves are torn to pieces, the eggs, and probably the luckless mother birds devoured. It is the native birds that chiefly suffer. There are ten times the number of owls in the bush than the number that haunt the farmyard trees. Little wonder, then, that for a while the smaller birds were on the decrease. I say for a while, because about 1925-26 the owl appeared to have it all his own way, while the smaller birds rapidly disappeared. Now, however, the owls, in this and other surrounding districts, have practically disappeared, while the native birds have increased.

As an example of the damage done by these grey killers, the following facts will show only too plainly why we should do our best to exterminate them. Three years ago, a pair of grey warblers that were always to be seen about the fruit trees of the orchard, nested in an old pear tree, the nest being very well hidden. A pair of silver eyes at the same time built in a hawthorn hedge close by. They, unlike the warblers, took little or no pains in hiding their nest. It was built on a branch projecting over an old drain; and could be seen at quite a distance.

For a while all was well. I think there were young birds in the warblers' swinging home. The silver eyes were brooding on their eggs. Then, one night, the melancholy cry of an owl was heard. For three nights he haunted the orchard, in that time robbing both nests. The fourth night, to the vengeful crack of a gun, he toppled from his perch on the ridge of the barn. Neither warblers nor silver eyes were ever seen again.

This owl is quite fearless of man, and will approach to within a few feet of him. Some time ago, I was returning home just at twilight, when I was startled by the cry of one close by. A glance round showed him perched on the branch of a dead tree, within twenty feet of me. I threw a stone at him, but instead of taking fright he darted in pursuit of the missile. Doubtless he took it for a moth or some such insect. A half-dozen or so stones he treated in a similar fashion. It was not until one

thumped on his perch, upsetting him, that he eventually took fright. At that, he only flew fifty yards or so to another perch, from where he regarded me suspiciously, cocking his head first on one side and then on the other.

Another fact will further show their boldness. A neighbour had a hen with a dozen chickens which one by one disappeared. Traps failing to catch stoats or other vermin, the blame was laid on a German owl. Deciding to shoot it, our neighbour accordingly waited in the vicinity of the coop one moonlight night, his gun barrel projecting in front of him. For some time he waited, with his eyes fixed on the surrounding trees. At last, tiring of his steady watching he chanced to look down, and beheld the very bird he was hunting perched on the barrels of his gun. Although never witnessing anything like this, I have many times seen them alight within a few feet of me.

A peculiar fact about them is that at first moreporks appeared to hold sway in the bush. Then the owls appeared in hundreds and the moreporks disappeared. Now again the owls appear to be dying out, while the moreporks are again making their appearance. To give an example of the owls that lived in one small patch of bush. While returning from school one night, myself and a few companions were invited over to witness the falling of a giant red pine. The crash of that grand tree as it fell was a sight never to be forgotten. Perhaps more so, however, was that of scores of startled owls, which swarmed everywhere, making the bush ring with their wild whistling. Indeed there must have been hundreds of them, for they were visible everywhere, and others could be heard on all sides. During that period I only once heard the sad cry of a morepork. Now they are quite plentiful, while the owls are fast disappearing.

The owls themselves are not hard to catch. Using an ordinary rabbit trap, they can be trapped very easily at the mouths of old rabbit burrows in clay banks. If there are any trees nearby this method usually proves very successful. They can usually be shot among the burnt stumps and fallen bush. Using a light shotgun a surprising number can often be taken. There is some peculiar attraction for the owls among the moss-covered fallen trunks. Perhaps it is the grubs and beetles that are usually to be found among the same that attract them. Perhaps, and of the two I think the latter by far the more probable, it is the fact that their colour blends so perfectly with that of the logs that they adopt it as a natural means of safety.

Having no enemies, it seems very probable that these birds will naturally increase. If such be the case, our smaller native birds are doomed. Perhaps stoats account for a few owls, but even those blood-thirsty little killers as a general rule show caution as to what they attack. Harrier hawks probably destroy

an odd one, although I only know of one occasion in which one actually caught an owl—that was after it had been mobbed by starlings. Several times I have seen them swoop at the grey shapes which, although looking decidedly uncomfortable and frightened, refused to leave their perches, thus causing the harrier to flap off in search of other prey. Once or twice I have seen cats stalking them, usually in the bright moonlight. In every case, however, the grey birds proved too wary and wideawake, never letting puss get within striking distance.

Thus it would seem that with no natural enemies the owl will naturally increase. Such, however, does not seem to be the case, for within the last few years there has been a decided decrease in their numbers, until within the last year they have, in this district at least, almost entirely disappeared, it being now but seldom that one hears their weird cry. This may be because the district has been killed out by them.

On the other hand, the equally mournful cry of the morepork can now be heard on every hand throughout the night. That he is not nearly so harmful to our small native birds as is the owl is easily seen by the fact that while moreporks and other birds lived and flourished side by side for probably centuries, directly the owl was introduced both began rapidly to disappear.

Of course, owls haunting the neighbourhood of farm buildings do a certain amount of good in the way of destroying vermin, such as mice, rats, insects, and a considerable number of sparrows and other such birds. Nevertheless the damage done by the owl to our native birds far exceeds the good he may do in the way of helping the farmer. After summing things up, the wisest plan seems to be to destroy all these grey killers that come our way, for unless we do our beautiful, friendly native birds must surely become less and less until finally they disappear.



ESSENTIAL.

The one thing that conservation needs most is continuity of policy.—*American Game.*

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
Introduction	1
The Call of Natural Beauty	2-4
A Plea for the Trees	4
Have We Taken Heed?	4
Oil Pollution	5-7
Conservation by Education	7
August	7
Annual General Meeting	8-11
Bird-Liming	11-13
The Little Captives	13
The Menace of the German Owl	14-16